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PROGRAM Dan Rather: News and Commentary STATION WTOP Radio  
CBS Network

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SUBJECT Iran-Contra Affair/Search for New CIA Director

DAN RATHER: They are now looking for a successor to CIA Director William Casey. And the beat goes on in the effort to drive White House Chief of Staff Donald Regan out. First Lady Nancy Reagan says, in effect, "He is my man. They done him wrong," speaking of the President; and "they" being anybody and everybody who has had anything to do with Iran Scam, or whatever one chooses to call the double-dealing, wheeling-dealing, big-money fiasco that resulted in U.S. weapons going to the Ayatollah Khomeini and cash going to gun-running middlemen.

As for newly announced plans for President Reagan to go into the hospital for several days in January, just as investigations will be scheduled to resume, we are, quote, assured, unquote, that they have nothing to do with the Iran debacle.

What a strange story. And getting stranger by the hour.

More after this.

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RATHER: If there are any plans for President Reagan to call in John Poindexter and Oliver North and simply ask them, or command them, "Tell me what happened, and why," those plans are not in evidence. This is one of the continuing mysteries in this whole deal about how and why Iranian were given weapons -- in some cases, at least, sold weapons -- although it now appears the Ayatollah may not have paid for all the U.S. weapons he got, and he got plenty.

Another is what is happening to Bill Casey, the Wall Streeter who became CIA Director. Senator Barry Goldwater, for

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one, never really liked the idea of Casey heading the CIA. And at one point early in the Reagan presidency, Goldwater tried to get Casey out. He failed. We never got the full story exactly as to why.

Casey stayed and became a kind of Daddy Warbucks character in the undeclared Central American war. You remember Daddy Warbucks, the Little Orphan Annie character. Except in the case of Casey, it was not funny. It certainly was not to Casey. He took his job seriously and, by his standards, did his best.

In his seventies, Casey was having secret U.S. aircraft cranked up at odd hours for secret flights to dirt strips in the Central American jungles, commanding a secret army on secret missions.

Now they are looking for Casey's successor.

Oliver North today portrayed himself as a lonely and persecuted figure. He said he was taking advice just from his attorney and getting comfort only from his family and the Lord. North reacted sharply to First Lady Nancy Reagan's complaint of yesterday saying that her husband, the President, was, quote, not told the truth, unquote, and that Mr. Reagan wishes North and his former boss, Admiral John Poindexter, would tell what they know about the Iran arms/Contra aid scandal. North and Poindexter have repeatedly invoked their Fifth Amendment protection against self-incrimination.

North, grimmed-face, today said, "The President has not asked me to do that." Which is to say, tell everything he knows and not take the Fifth. "I don't believe the President really wants me to abandon my individual rights under the Constitution," said North.

White House spokesman Albert Brashear agreed, saying, "The President has not asked anyone to give up their constitutional rights."

As with Alice-in-Wonderland, this whole thing just gets curiouser and curiouser.